

**MATERIALS:**

- Poems for each student (there should be a variety).
- Journals and writing utensils.
- Space for students to spread out and move for certain activities.

# OPENING QUESTIONS

- What does the term Verbatim mean? (Watch Reasonable Doubt Video “Theme: Creating the Script: Audience, Artistry, Ethics, & Community – The Process: Audience, Artistry, and Ethics”)
- Do we use this technique in our everyday lives ?
- What are the advantages of this story telling ?
- What disadvantages does it have ?

## PROCESS

**1. Elements of Story Telling:** Provide examples and definitions for the following: Tempo/Pauses; Tone; Articulation; Diction; Expression (physical and verbal)

**2. Listen and Repeat:** With students in partners, use a variety of poetry and do the following activities to practice the above Elements of Storytelling. Student A reads one line, Student B listens and repeats, then Student B will read and Student A will listen and repeat. (Student A and Student B should have different poems from each other).

- Read each line very fast/very slow with random pauses between words.
- Read each line by over-enunciating consonant sounds/by mumbling and slurring your words.

QUICK QUESTION: How can tone imply a bias? How might actors impose tone in their work that might express certain opinions even though the words may not?

- Read each line by adding levels of expression (i.e., listener interprets words by making them into movements; they perform it as if they can't stop smiling; announcing it to the entire world; whispering gossip to your best friend; like you're playing a prank, and so on).

**3. Story Time:** Teacher demonstrates first by telling the class a story of a time where they persevered. Encourage strong listening here. Have students volunteer to retell the story. Students will rate performances with a thumbs up, sideways, or down on accuracy of details, physicality, tone, etc. Students may try to make fun of the teacher. This is a teachable moment on honouring the story, the storyteller, and maintaining the integrity of the narrative.

- Have students partner up and tell each other a story of a time where they persevered (ensure that they are choosing stories that they truly feel safe sharing with the entire class so they aren't putting themselves in compromising positions) and their partners will listen to their story and try to remember their movements and will retell the story to the entire class exactly how it was told. They should try to embody the character of their partner. Each student must share the story they were told. This is important for the entire class to practice taking the risk and sharing. Make sure there is no corrections of the story or coaching from the sidelines from the other student. Students can discuss the accuracy with their partner after everyone finishes. If students are struggling with coming up with a story, you may suggest to share a story that has not happened to them but they know about it, or a story of a character they read in a book or saw on a t.v. series that persevered and how that could be inspirational.

## **CLOSING ACTIVITY**

Discuss: Was it easy to tell the story accurately? What were the easy parts to remember? What were the hard parts to remember? Why? (Show the Reasonable Doubt Video “Theme: Creating the Script: Audience, Artistry, Ethics, & Community – Relationships: The Greatest Challenge & The Greatest Opportunity”)

Journal Entry #1 In your own words, describe Verbatim Theatre and how this can be used as a tool to examine social justice issues in our communities. How can this type of theatre help communities develop empathy? What are the challenges of using this type of theatre?

**2****MATERIALS:**

- Powerpoint presentation on this lesson, including images of the creators, designers, and set.
- Data projector with audio to watch interview of creators.
- Journals or loose leaf and writing utensils for set sketch.

**HOW DO WE READ THIS SCRIPT ?**

As you explore the script you will discover that there are too many roles to cast each individual student as a recurring character.

**PRE-READING**

1. Decide how you will pursue reading the script as a group (perhaps it's easiest to sit in a circle and have students read each part going clockwise around the circle). Teacher reads any important stage directions or identifying information.
2. Discuss: How would the directors go about casting this with only 6 actors? How do they cast this show ethically? What does it mean to cast something ethically? We need to understand that we are doing this play for learning purposes only and that as we all take on a variety of roles it is with respect and honour.
3. Research the creators of this play: What is their reason for creating this play? (Watch video on their answer here: Watch "Reasonable Doubt Vid 2 v2-01: Meet the Artists, Meet the Play: What drew you to this project at this point in your life and career?")
4. Set Design: In groups, have students do a 5 minute quick sketch of what they think the set might look like based on the description on page 1. Students will present their ideas. Show students the design for the production at Persephone Theatre.

**TABLE READ**

1. Read pages 1-16.
2. Note how difficult it is to read the way real people speak.

**STAGE IT !**

In groups of 5-6, have students choose one page of the script to try to stage (10-15 minutes only to rehearse).

- a) Each group should choose a different page.
- b) They should focus their attentions on stage placement, blocking, and representing status and power in their physicality.
- c) They should attempt at being expressive in their vocalizations without being grotesque or caricatures.
- d) Each group will present to class.

**CLOSING ACTIVITY**

Reflection: Each group will take one of the following talking points to discuss among their group members and then share with the class after:

- Are the characters relatable in these first 16 pages?
- Who do you think the target audience is and do the creators incorporate a wide variety of narratives in this play so far?
- How is staging a form of symbolism? How is status/power represented symbolically in theatre?

# THEATRE AS HISTORICAL RECORD ?

Textbooks are 'matter-of-fact' but what part of history do they often tell? How can theatre provide more to history? How has theatre influenced history? How has theatre contributed to silencing voices of those who have been marginalized by dominant culture? ( Watch “A Message from the Playwrights to Educators, Students, & Communities - Can Saskatchewan theatre serve as a history textbook of sorts?”)

## PRE-READING

Looking at various photos from Persephone Theatre's more recent productions, have the students describe their initial impressions of the images. What do they notice? What do they have in common? What are they missing?

- a) Many of the actors are white-passing; many of the narratives are eurocentric stories. The largest theatre in SK has a lot of influence, and on their mainstage they often produced plays that didn't include enough diversity, perpetuating the silencing of marginalized groups of people in Saskatoon and SK.
- b) What is our responsibility as artists as we continue to create contemporary theatre? Have the creators of this play worked in a more equitable way to include a variety of diverse voices?
- c) How can a lack of representation in both the stories and the hired professionals make the greater public feel about theatre in SK?

## STAGE IT !

1. Divide the class into groups of 5-6:  
To practice certain acting/directing elements we begin with some whacky exercises:  
Start with your favorite warm up (my groups love Whoosh/Whoa)  
Give each group a secret scenario that they have to play out, mime, and only-speak in gibberish (no dialogue). They should focus on these elements: blocking, posture, facial expression, movement, and sounds (meaning they can use their voice but only to express tone, not dialogue). Secret Scenarios should be absurd; for example, a lion walks into the typing pool at an office; a group of people get lost in a forest where the trees are completely covered in worms; a bus of people are dropped off at a farm where chickens are getting butchered, etc.  
Students perform and audience must guess what they think the scenario is, the goal is that they should be close! We're trying to present accuracy.
2. In these groups, assign each group a section of the script pages 16-32 (up to page 11). Have them rehearse with focus on the same 5 elements (blocking, posture, facial expression, movement, and sounds - this time tone in voice).
  - a) Present performances to the class in chronological order.

## CLOSING ACTIVITY

Journal #2: How does this play, so far, work on amplifying the voices of those who have been marginalized by the dominant culture? Use concrete examples from the script.

**MATERIALS:**

- Scripts.
- Space to rehearse in groups and perform.
- Journals and writing utensils.
- Photos of Persephone's recent productions.

# INTERMISSION!

Intermissions are purposeful breaks in a full length play. Here's the thing: playwrights do not need to include an intermission!

## PRE-READING

1) Mime-Time:

Split the class into 3 different groups, the groups will have 5 minutes to arrange an ensemble mime that the other groups will watch, and they will have to guess what is happening in each scenario:

- Group 1: An audience enter's the lobby from a theatre, they've thoroughly enjoyed the first Act of the show, and it ended with a bit of a cliff-hanger.
- Group 2: An audience enter's the lobby from a theatre, the first Act was 2hours long, and the content was rather heavy.
- Group 3: An audience enter's the lobby from a theatre, Act 1 was a regular amount of time (about 1 hour) but it was very confusing in a not-so-goodway.

2) After performing and guessing what's going on (based on physicality, choices in behaviour, and facial expression) what can we discern about intermissions? What is their purpose? Can they go anywhere in a play? Why is the audience a major player in this choice?

## READING

1) Read through pages 32 - 41. Focus on tension. How does tension build in a play like this? There isn't a lot of inter-character relationship development. What is the bigger conflict? We know the conflict in the court case, but there is another one present here. It could be that it's the public versus racism. How are people handling this conflict?

2) Additionally, how do the creators of this play use music to build the tension? How do plays typically use music to enhance a performance? Is the music influencing the audience to feel sympathy for any particular side of the conflict? How is the music juxtaposing with the dialogue that's happening in the court room? (Watch "Ethical Space: The Relationship Between the Audience and the Actors - Music as Breath")

## STAGING

Split into 3-4 students per group. Give each group pages 43-45 (end at Angel's Monologue). Have students choose characters that they don't relate to and try to deliver their monologue with a level of genuine realism. Have them block the scenes using symbolic choices rather than realistic ones.

## CLOSING ACTIVITY

Think-Pair-Share: Why did the creators of the play place the intermission at this point? How can theatre artists work to have their audiences develop empathy for people they normally wouldn't have empathy for if they just met them on the street? Knowing this, what does it take to develop empathy? Why does empathy encourage a more inclusive and equitable community?

**MATERIALS:**

- Scripts.
- Space to rehearse in groups and perform.

# FORUM THEATRE

Using a different Theatre Style (Forum Theatre AKA Theatre of the Oppressed), we will explore the perspectives of some of the characters of “Reasonable Doubt” and how our own ideas might affect the conversation.

**CURRICULAR  
OUTCOMES**

**CH 20.3 CR 20.1  
CP 30.3 CP 30.2**

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF T.O.

1. Using Theatre of the Oppressed: A Manual for Educators by Gopal Midha (University of Massachusetts Amherst) have the students read pages 8-10, discuss with a neighbour what they think the theatre style is, and then discuss as a class.
2. Watch this video (9 min) of an example of how Forum Theatre is used.  
<https://youtu.be/NbYx01re-ec>
3. Students may reflect on the television program “What Would You Do?” which is more of a form of Invisible Theatre, but with similar elements of audience involvement.

## READING

Read as a class pages 45 - end of 49.



## FORUM THEATRE TIME

Split into 3-4 students per group.

- a) 2 students (actors) will be characters Ken and Bill on pages 48-49. The remaining students in the group will be audience members.
- b) Actors will read the scene aloud in their group and the audience member will listen, allowing moments of emotional prompting to happen to them and have them mentally log it.
- c) Actors will read through the scene again, this time, the audience member will FREEZE the performance, tap one of the characters out and jump in AS THEMSELVES speaking to the character whose lines prompted their emotions.
- d) The Actor remaining in the scene should try to have a short conversation or at the very least a response to the statement/question made by the audience member.
- e) Have students trade roles, audience members are now actors, and vice versa. Let them tackle this controversial discussion. If discussions organically arise during this work, let it happen. Be aware of them and try to mediate in case they get heated. Reminding them that everyone’s thoughts are valid, even if we disagree.

## CLOSING ACTIVITY

Journal #3: How can forum theatre be used to question the status quo and empower others (audience, artists, etc.) to make change? (Watch “Creating the Script: Audience, Artistry, Ethics, & Community - Open Rehearsals: Community Voices Integrated into Script”

“Creating the Script: Audience, Artistry, Ethics, & Community - Spontaneous Declarations; Unlikely Dialogues”)

- Scripts.
- Data projector with audio.
- Forum Theatre Manual.
- Space to rehearse in groups and perform.
- Journals and writing utensils.

**MATERIALS:**

## THE END

When this play was produced at Persephone Theatre, they held a "Courageous Conversation" after every performance facilitated by staff members at Persephone Theatre. This allowed audience members to participate in the conversation they just witnessed on stage. (Watch "Ethical Space: The Relationship Between the Audience and the Actors - The Audience in Dialogue after the Performances")

## REFLECT AND DIRECT

1. Complete Reading the play, pages 50 - 67.
2. \*\*Read next section before doing this activity!
3. Sort students into partners (preferably people they've never worked with before for creativity purposes). Have them decide on a moment, no more than one page of text, in the play that they felt was the **MOST IMPACTFUL**. Together as a duo, they will plan how they would direct that moment using effective, artistic, and symbolic blocking, appropriate set and lights, and casting. Give them about 10 minutes for the planning and encourage them to write it down on a piece of paper or sticky notes in their script.
4. Have each duo showcase their directing by getting volunteer actors from the other members of the class. Directors will coach the actors. Actors do a run-thru of the moment.

## CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

1. Part of being an artist is being able to look at other works of art and understanding the technique that went into the work, while also thinking about ways that you would try to convey the same message, or if there is a different message in the work that you would focus on instead.
2. There is a difference between Criticism and Constructive Criticism. Criticism is simply just pointing out that something didn't work. Constructive criticism is acknowledging what went well, what may not have worked, and providing a solution to any of the items that didn't work according to the critique.
3. While students watch the other students' directing attempts, have the muse their critical eyes and have different students provide the following items:
  - a) What they thought worked really well.
  - b) What they thought could use improvement.
  - c) How they would improve what requires improvement.

## CLOSING ACTIVITY

Discuss: As a class, how could the group work together on developing a Verbatim Theatre collective creation (short play)? What are our first steps? Who will be responsible for which tasks and roles?

**MATERIALS:**

- Scripts.
- Space to rehearse in groups and perform.